

# Beltrone accepts job with Exergy Development

By Karl Pluckett | 06/02/10

Cascade County Commissioner Peggy Beltrone, a relentless promoter of wind development for 10 years, announced her resignation Tuesday to join renewable energy developer Exergy Development Group.

Beltrone said she plans to stay in her public post for another three months, until early September - 28 months shy of completing her third term, which expires Dec. 31, 2012.

Boise-based Exergy announced Beltrone's hiring Tuesday as president of a new wind technology division called Exergy Integrated Systems.

Beltrone, a commissioner for 16 years, said Exergy Development approached her about the new job.

"The timing is what it is," Beltrone said. "It's a great opportunity to do something different in an area I really have a lot of passion about."

Boise-based Exergy maintains offices in Montana, California, Minnesota and Illinois.

The company installed Montana's first locally owned wind farm, the 9-megawatt Horseshoe Bend development just west of Great Falls in 2006.

Exergy, which was founded in Helena in 2001, currently is installing the largest wind-power project in Idaho history, according to company officials.

"Beltrone brings local and national experience in all facets of renewable energy," Exergy CEO James Carkulis said.

The spin-off division Beltrone will head is tasked with fostering the design, development and deployment of technologies, beginning with a "vertical-axis" wind turbine called Zilo.

Beltrone said it is her hope that the turbines will be manufactured in Great Falls, where the company plans to open an office. Beltrone will be based in Great Falls.

"It's a chance to take what I've learned from both the public sector, and (the) wind and

renewable area I've been working in, and apply it to an opportunity to create jobs," she said.

Beltrone developed the county's first wind marketing program in 2001, and a big part of her agenda ever since then has been promoting wind development in Cascade County and Montana. As she prepares to leave, the county has 9 megawatts of installed wind power, and Invenergy, which owns the 135-megawatt Judith Gap Wind Farm in Wheatland County, is considering constructing a major wind farm in the Belt area.

Beltrone also lobbied for the 214-mile Montana Alberta Tie Line, a transmission line planned between Great Falls and Lethbridge. Wind developers already have purchased capacity on the line.

Just this year, Beltrone has made wind business trips to Dallas and Ireland and two visits to Washington, D.C. Last year, she visited eight West Coast cities to speak with state regulators, legislators and utility executives about Montana's energy and transmission capabilities.

Beltrone said her new post would allow her "more focus and greater reach."

"I loved working for the people of Cascade County," she added.

Beltrone, 53, first was elected commissioner as a Democrat in 1994. She won her third six-year term in 2006.

She said she has a couple of projects she wants to complete, including the 2010-11 budget, prior to leaving the commission

If Beltrone holds to that schedule, the Democratic Party would submit three names and Republican Joe Briggs and Democrat Bill Salina would decide on her replacement from among those on that list.

If Beltrone resigns at least 75 days before the Nov. 2 general election ? by Aug. 19 ? the replacement process would be different.

Under that scenario, the Cascade County Democratic and Republican parties each would submit a name. Those candidates would then appear on the Nov. 2 ballot, with the winner serving out Beltrone's term. Commissioners would make an appointment to the board until the election.

No matter how the seat is filled, the candidate will serve until Dec. 31, 2012.

"It's been a pleasure working with her, and I'm sure she'll do well in a new position," Briggs said of Beltrone. "This is something she's long been an advocate of."

Beltrone's history with the county gave her insight into issues that were "off my radar," Salina said.

"I depended on her counsel and enjoyed her company," he said.

Beltrone chairs the community wind initiative of the 25 x 25 National Alliance, a group that promotes using 25 percent renewable energy in the United States by the year 2025.

She serves on the steering committee for the U.S. Department of Energy's Wind Power America program.

She also co-authored a wind energy guide for the National Association of Counties and the U.S. Department of Energy.

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